

By STUART EARP Marlow 0, Wycombe 1

LAST Tuesday, Wycombe Wanderers played their best football of the season in beating Hayes 2-0 at Church Road. On Saturday they produced their worst.

Had it not been for a Steve Perrin goal in the 84th minute, Wycombe would have been forced to replay this F.A. Cup first qualifying round encounter against Marlow, a team from the Athenian League Division One, who have won only one of their four matches this season.

Without wishing to take anything away from Marlow, who raised their game and fought hard throughout, Wanderers were just too bad to be true on Saturday. Nothing would go right for them from the start and there were times when it looked on the cards that they would finish on the losing side.

Before the match, most people were wondering just how many goals Wycombe would score. Perhaps this was the trouble. The team was overconfident, the fans were overconfident and both paid the penalty with downright poor football. It wasn't so much that Marlow played particularly well, it was more a case of Wanderers playing badly.

They had 80 per cent of the possession but wasted it time and again. Passes went astray with monotonous regularity from both sides and the Blues just didn't look the same side that turned out against Hayes.

The forwards that scored twice before the interval on that night looked completely different players. Dylan Evans, for instance, who had such a fine game at Church Road, couldn't put a foot right while the Wycombe midfield trio were often busted out of it by their opposite numbers. Even the visitors' defence looked shaky at times.

Marlow, of course, will be cock-a-hoop with this result. They kept plugging away, made the most of Wycombe's countless errors and with a bit more fire power upfront, they could have caused one of the shocks of the season. Every one of their players worked like trojans and there were particularly good performances from Terry Staines, Dave Wigley, Pete Sewell and Pete Eyres. The last named three all spent some time at Wycombe and certainly enjoyed playing against their old club.

Perhaps it was Saturday's weather that threw Wanderers out of their stride. After all, last week they played with a hurricane wind at Dagenham, this time it was scorching hot. Perhaps it was the choice of match ball. Both balls used looked soft and difficult to control. These two factors may have contributed to their performance but are hardly real excuses.

Wanderers forced four corners in the opening 20 minutes (and 14 in all). During that time, Keith Searle almost opened the Blues account when he turned neatly inside the Marlow box and was robbed of a shot by Pete Stone's covering. Then, from one of the flag kicks, Searle nodded the ball deep into the area where Perrin tried to deflect the ball home but saw Tim Dickinson clear the ball off the line.

Even at this stage, Wycombe looked to be struggling to assert their authority. Their football was too predictable and Marlow had little trouble in breaking up their attacks. In the 19th minute Sewell came to Marlow's rescue by blocking a fierce drive from Perrin, Steve hammering the rebound wide.

Marlow, who only managed to beat Aylesbury at the third time of asking in a preliminary round, could have taken a shock lead with 20 minutes gone. From one of several free kicks awarded against Wycombe Paul Kurka bent a swerving shot around the Wycombe defensive wall and forced John Maskell to dive full length and grab the ball.

That close shave was all Marlow needed. They ran even harder and after Wigley had

produced a brave save from Searle at point blank range, Marlow hit back in the 28th minute. Maskell came out to collect a high ball and was challenged by Staines. The ball fell loose for Page who half hit his shot towards the net. Ray Palmer raced in to add what would have been the finishing touches but Keith Mead just managed to get there first and clear off the line.

There was a rare moment of fluency after 35 minutes when Wanderers at last managed to string three passes together at speed. The move gave Evans a chance for goal but Wigley was positioned well to gather at the near post.

The hard working Staines, who rarely wasted the ball, set up a chance for Palmer just before the break but the lanky striker sent the ball into the side netting and then at the other end, Wigley saved well at the feet of Evans after Searle had split open the home defence.

The final first half whistle brought hope of better things to come. Perhaps Wycombe would have learnt their lesson from the first 45 minutes.

At first, things looked promising. From the kick off the Blues worked the ball out to the left where Kennedy crossed into the box. Wigley lost the ball as he went up and it dropped nicely for Perrin to shoot but he struck the ball straight at the prostrate goalkeeper. Then Kennedy fired in a left foot effort which Wigley parried well.

Before long, however, it became obvious that Wycombe would still continue to struggle. Their basics began to go wrong and the passing went from bad to worse. The situation was growing more and more anxious for the Rothmans Isthmian League champions. One error could have given Marlow a goal and that, it seemed, would be enough to decide the issue.

Mick Hollifield, who for once could not find his top form, had two chances to open

Wycombe's account in the 57th minute but was first thwarted by Wigley and then Stone, who cleared the second effort off the line. Three minutes later Stone's through ball split a square Wanderers defence but Mick Page floated his shot too far, the ball going over the crossbar.

Marlow substituted Staines with Peter Edmonds — a peculiar decision — in the 60th minute and soon afterwards Terry Reardon came on for Graham Mackenzie, Reardon's first football since his injury at Sutton a couple of weeks ago. The changes made no difference. Reardon was unable to step up Wycombe's lethargic pace while Edmonds failed to make any impact.

Chants of "Wembley, here we come" from the Marlow supporters were perhaps a trifle optimistic in the second half but as the game wore on, a replay looked more and more likely.

Then, with only six minutes left, Wanderers at last managed to get the ball in the net after one mighty scramble. Kennedy started the move with a cross into the box. Searle chested the ball down and got in one shot that struck a defender and after, a series of missed clearances and deflected shots, Perrin finally hit the ball home.

Even with the goal behind them, Wycombe still couldn't get into anything like top gear although Marlow failed to put any pressure on them in the last five minutes.

On this showing a repeat of last year's heroics against Newport and Peterborough looked very far away.

MARLOW: D. Wigley, T. Dickinson, P. Sewell, P. Stone, M. McKeown, C. Reid, P. Eyres, T. Staines (sub. P. Edmonds, 60 mins.), R. Palmer, M. Page, P. Kurka.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; K. Mead, A. Phillips, D. Bullock, G. Hand; G. Mackenzie (sub. T. Reardon 64 mins.), H. Kennedy, M. Hollifield, D. Evans, K. Searle, S. Perrin.

Referee: R. Buckingham (Abingdon).
Half-time: 0-0. **Goalscorer:** Wycombe — Perrin (84).



DAVE WIGLEY
... fine saves

LATEST TABLES

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE									
DIVISION I					Pen Pts.				
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	C	D
L'head	8	6	2	0	24	7	20	3	0
Ilford	8	6	2	0	19	6	20	1	0
Enfield	8	6	1	1	11	4	19	2	0
W. Wan	7	5	1	1	11	6	16	0	0
Dg'ham	6	5	0	1	14	3	15	0	0
Tooting	7	5	0	2	10	7	15	3	0
Clapton	8	5	0	3	11	12	15	7	0
Sutton	7	4	1	2	11	7	13	1	0
Dulwich	8	4	1	3	13	9	13	2	0
Bishops	9	4	1	4	13	12	13	0	0
Barking	8	3	0	5	11	9	9	1	0
Woking	8	2	3	3	12	11	9	3	0
Oxford	7	3	0	4	7	13	9	0	0
W'armstow	7	2	2	3	7	8	8	2	0
Hendon	9	2	2	5	7	12	8	1	0
Hitchin	8	2	1	5	14	17	7	2	0
Slough	8	2	1	5	5	9	7	1	0
Walton	8	2	1	5	8	22	7	2	0
Hayes	9	1	3	5	7	14	6	6	0
Leystone	7	2	0	5	5	12	6	2	0
Kings	8	2	0	6	4	14	6	1	0
Bromley	7	1	0	6	4	14	3	0	0

DIVISION II									
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	C	D
M'head	8	5	1	2	12	7	16	0	0
St Albans	8	4	3	1	12	10	15	1	0
Chesham	8	4	2	2	14	5	14	3	0
Horsham	7	4	1	2	13	5	13	1	0
Harwich	8	4	1	3	14	9	13	1	0
Staines	8	4	1	3	8	6	13	0	4
Tilbury	8	4	1	3	14	12	13	0	0
W'gham	8	4	0	4	9	9	12	3	0
Southall	8	3	2	3	9	9	11	3	0
Croydon	8	3	2	3	11	13	11	4	0
Harlow	8	3	2	3	9	13	11	3	0
Hertford	7	3	1	3	9	9	10	5	0
Carlton	7	3	0	4	6	8	9	2	0
Casuals	7	2	2	3	4	11	8	1	0
Hampton	7	2	1	4	8	8	8	1	0
Finchley	8	2	1	5	5	14	7	1	0
Aveley	7	2	0	5	6	11	6	1	0
Boreham	6	0	3	3	6	10	3	2	0

C — Cautions, One pt., D — Dismissals, four pts.